DISTRIBUTING PACKETS AMONG MULTIPLE TIERS OF NETWORK APPLIANCES

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

5   A network is disclosed that includes a first tier of forwarding agents connected to a first tier of network devices. A second tier of forwarding agents is connected to a second tier of network devices. A service manager is configured to receive a packet from one of the forwarding agents; determine the tier of the forwarding agent; and send an instruction to the forwarding agent directing the forwarding agent to forward the packet

10   to a network device connected to the tier of forwarding agents that includes the forwarding agent.